

# What happen to (curriculum) critical theory?

The need to go above and beyond  
neoliberal rage without avoiding it<sup>1</sup>

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## The great regression

*I suggest that we learn to think  
about capitalism coming to an end  
without assuming responsibility for  
answering the question of what one  
proposes to put in its place.*

(Streeck 2014, 44)

Once upon a time, a cook decided to gather all the birds in the world and asked the birds what kind of seasoning that they would like to be marinated in when they are cooked and eaten. The cooker was all of democracy, so it

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was claimed. One of the chickens replied that “we the birds don’t want to be eaten whatsoever period.” The cook replied “that is out of the question.” Democracy doesn’t go that far. This little story describes rather well the metaphor of our globalized world. The world is organized in such a way that we just have the right to choose the flavoring for us to be marinated in before being consumed. And, this world has been sold to all of us as a democratic world, that paradoxically the sovereignty of each nation is an object of museum. This little story, shared by Eduardo Galeano (2010), is a vivid example of the sadism and brutality of late global capitalism, which makes capitalism, democracy, equality, freedom, and justice mutually exclusive realities and thus a divisive social issue. Let’s take a look to some features of our current momentum.

Between 1900 and 1999, the US used 4,500 million tons of cement. Between 2011 and 2013 China consumed 6,500 million tons of cement. That is, in just 3 years China consumed 50% more cement than US consumed in the preceding century (Harvey 2016). In the US, the top 0.1% has accumulated more wealth than the entire bottom 90%. With the advent of globalization, inequality becomes a global nightmare. Globalization globalized the few and localized the rest (Bauman 1998). Global inequality is much greater than inequality within any individual country.

In the U.S., in the summer 2017, in different states, for the first time in the history, a significant number of commercial places were prevented from taking off due to high temperatures between 123 and 125 degrees Fahrenheit, at a time when President Trump is walking away from Paris agreement. In the U.S., a kid drops out of school every 41 seconds, and the ‘school to prison pipeline’ became domesticated. In the U.S., in June 2014, student loan debt was approximately \$1.3 trillion that affected 44 million borrowers who had an average outstanding loan balance of \$37,172). What is shocking is that for much lower debt “the European Union and IMF promptly tore Greece apart. For comparable or lower sums, recession, austerity measures, personal sacrifice, unemployment, and poverty are imposed on the millions of citizens of indebt countries” (Lazzarato 2015, 65). In Texas, one school district reinstates corporal punishment. Now students who misbehave in class will be paddled until they get better grades.

They are now shipping paddles to their teachers to be used as corporal punishment when students misbehave (Smith 2017). Also, in the U.S., the shocking numbers of African Americans and minorities murdered by the police and incarcerated has become the 'norm.'

In Brazil, the legacy of the Workers Party government for more than a decade, despite all the controversies, corruptions, accusations, and achievements, was not able to 'avoid' the political carnage. Two decades later, the same nation that elected Lula da Silva and Dilma Roussef, made a *u-turn* and elected a far-right former army captain Jair Bolsonaro. Venezuela. Hugo Chavez mythical leadership and conquests are on collapsing with Nicolas Maduro under constant attack both internally and externally.

Aleppo, Bagdad, Benghazi, Srebrenica, Ruanda, Matabeleland, Crimea, the so-called war on drugs 'in Mexico', just to mention a few examples, reinforce a 'subjectivity' that should never have been constructed: immigrant, refugees. Massive waves of human beings, like never before, have the right to freedom and to escape war and hunger crumble the 'welfare' of the West. New York, Washington, Paris, London, Madrid, Brussels, Frankfurt, Istanbul, Cairo, bit by bit, the spectrum of 'abnormality' becomes domesticated. Today, a terrorist attack may still make the headlines of major newspapers but sadly barely constitutes a surprise.

Of all of the people in the world without access to safe water, almost 40% live in Africa; 589 million sub-Saharan Africans live without electricity and cook by burning whatever they can find. The expansion of West Bank settlements under every Israeli government became the 'norm.' Israel is probably the only nation in the world without fixed borders. To throw more ashes into the fire, just recently the US President Trump cavalierly recognized Jerusalem as the capital of Israel. The UK 'bravely' decided on 'Brexit.' They are done with the 'other.' What they ignore is that we all know that they have the privilege to 'Brexit.' As usual, 'the other' is disposable. Two years later, Brexit looks much more like 'Nexit' as it was not approved by British parliament yet. China decided to move towards the 'Beijing consensus', a new political management of the economy, a

‘nouveaux’ socialist political economy with Chinese characteristics (Enfu and Xiaoqin 2017); in India, Modi’s elected government represents “a far right force with undeniable neo-fascist characteristics” (Vanaik 2018, 40).

Despite such apocalyptic events in the West and beyond, the second decade of the 21st century is creating the path for a far-right agenda to succeed as we can see in France, Germany, Austria, Belgium, the Netherlands, Hungary, and Finland. The ‘masses’ are placing their vote on candidates who insult people with disabilities, women, and people of color as well as unleashed an overt attack against immigrants. The error of casting the vote ‘just’ based on class, race, or gender dynamics persists. Welcome to the reign of low identity politics. Welcome to the real colors of the epistemicide. Democracy is being used to kill democracy (Wolf 2007). We are facing the normalization of shock, of chaos, to the cynicism of full blast blatant fascism and authoritarianism, peppered with sublime irony. To add more ashes to the Western fire, in Cataluña, people voted for independence from Spain.

As if such pandemonium is not enough, much of the political and educational left persists clinging to an archaic board, embarking on ‘theoretical timesharing,’ which helps the radical right to enjoy a prolonged and fat sabbatical. Shockingly, and as some argue, people speak more about the end of the world than the end of capitalism. Such havoc reveals a sort of “Polanyic mechanic” unleashed by global neoliberal ideological matrix that drove society to what has been defined as the inevitable way forward regardless its lethal consequences (Geiselberger 2017, 12). Oddly, in a moment that we are witnessing, “the remarkable resurgence of ideological movements throughout the world somewhere in the [Western] left bank it is announced that the concept of ideology is now obsolete” (Eagleton 1991, xi). The claim that we live in a non-ideological momentum is indeed an ideological claim (Paraskeva & Torres Santome 2012). It would be unreasonable to suggest that these economic, cultural, epistemological, and social transformations would not interfere with educational policies and politics. Indeed, education has been used to support one of the key arguments of neoliberal global impulses – especially since the fall of the

Berlin Wall – which is the fading of the “iron curtain of ideology and the vigorous emergence of the velvet curtain of culture” (Žižek 2008, 661).

The global far-right resurgence is the larva of the capitalist new neoliberal volcano. It is the result of a social symptom perpetually ignored throughout the centuries, and it needs to be seen as the continuous materialization of ‘the’ eugenic framework that festers modernity, and solidifies Modern Western Eurocentrism; in a word, the Empire. Welcome to the return of fascism – as we will see later on, in a refined populist dimension – the entrée of the neoliberal current hegemonic eugenic momentum, one that solidifies ‘the epistemicide’ (Santos 2014), and what I called education and curriculum epistemicide (Paraskeva 2011a; 2011b; 2014; 2016). This momentum welds a new nexus between education and political economy and takes it into a different level by kneeling public education and educators into new capitalist modes of production and consequently new conditions of class, gender, race, ethnic, sexual exploitation, inequality, and segregation required by market desires. There is no capitalism without perpetual dynamics of exploitation, inequality, and segregation. Capitalism and a just society and democracy are blunt oxymorons.

The history of the capitalist system is one of perpetual crisis. However, what is new in the current crisis is that neoliberalism dried both the central right and central left political options stimulating a major transformation on the right political specter (Porta 2014, 73). That is a specter that feeds and embraces a “dangerous populist wave, whose lethal feature relies not in is nationalistic conservative impulse, but in its eugenic reactionary creed” (Krastev 2014, 130). Neoliberal globalization “is a gigantic repacking enterprise – the pouring of old philosophical wine into new ideological bottles” (Steger 2002, 65). We are facing a collapse, which is not simply related with economic and cultural factors, but also shows “a crisis of social imagination about the future” (Berardi 2012, 8). What we are facing is indeed the reboot of mankind’s ideological revolution, one that frames the current Modern Western Eurocentric time, a paradoxical time.

On the one hand our current time is marked by huge developments and thespian changes, an era that is referred to as the electronic revolution of communications, information, genetics and the biotechnological. On the other hand, it is a time of disquieting regressions, a return of the social evils that appeared to have been or about to be overcome. The return of slavery and slavish work; the return of high vulnerability to old sicknesses that seemed to have been eradicated and appear now linked to new pandemics like HIV/AIDS; the return of the revolting social inequalities that gave their name to the social question at the end of the nineteenth century; in sum, the return of the specter of war, perhaps now more than ever a world war, although whether cold or not is as yet undecidable (Santos 2005, vii).

We are witnessing an era of “random regression symptoms” (Geiselberger 2017, 10). Such paradox graphically reveals how modernity and the totalitarian cult of Modern Western Eurocentric epistemological framework are maxed out. In a tribute to Marx and Engels (2012), one would claim that “a [new] spectre is haunting Modern Western Eurocentrism – the spectre of otherness [and] all powers of Modernity [US, China, Russia, EU] entered in a holy alliance to exorcise this spectre” (p. x). Perhaps this is the moment to dare “to learn to think about capitalism coming to an end without assuming responsibility for answering the question of what one proposes to put in its place” (Streeck 2014, 44).

## Game over!

*Let's go comrades, the European game is definitely finished, it is necessary to find something else*  
(Fanon 1963, 239).

Modernity is under the gun due the impossibility of perpetual submission from the 'the other.' That is, "the exclusion and cornering into poverty [better say, quasi extermination] of African, Asian, and Latin American and other non-Western otherness and their indomitable will to survive" pushed modernity to an unsustainable point (Dussel 2013). Modernity got lost irremediably between the real(ity) and representations of the real(ity). For all practical purposes, the Western Cartesian modernity model as a hegemonic matrix with its arrogant claim to address global social issues, is not just moribund, it is dead. Modernity, was/is a "misleading dream" (Harding 2008, 23). Modernity's final sentence was determined partially by modernity itself and its truly totalitarian cult, which was a cultural and economic napalm that attempted to erase all other epistemological manifestations that paradoxically ended up being systematically reinforced and strengthened from the belligerent clashes with modernity. If colonialism is a crime against humanity, and colonialism and imperialism had no existence outside of modernity, then modernity is also not innocent in such crime against humanity. Not because it was inconsequential in dodging genocidal policies and practices, but precisely because its very existence relies on its capacity to perpetuate massive genocide.

Peruvian public intellectual Quijano (1991) coined this Modern Western Eurocentric system of dominance, *el patron colonial de poder*, the 'coloniality matrix of power' (Mignolo 2018).

Great achievements in areas, such as space conquest and technologies have been reduced to a pale inconsequentiality for the massive majority of the world's population in face of slavery, genocide, holocaust, poverty, inequality, social and cognitive apartheid, intergenerational injustice, and the temerity to change nature, among other issues. Painfully all of these sagas are at the very root of such modern societal tech advancements. The

twentieth century, “was the last Eurocentric century” (Thernborn 2010, 59). As Frantz Fanon (1963) beautifully stated “let’s go comrades, the European game is definitely finished, it is necessary to find something else” (p. 239). The eugenicism of Eurocentrism is undeniable, an eugenicism that “asserts that only Europeans can progress and that Indigenous peoples are frozen in time, guided by knowledge systems that reinforce the past and do not look towards the future” (Battiste 2002, 4).

Needless to mention is how the educational/bildung system in general, curriculum, in particular, are both profoundly implicated in such epistemicide. In fact, by identifying particular forms of knowledge as ‘official,’ schooling participates in a blunt epistemicide (Santos 1997; Paraskeva 2011a) – a lethal tool that feeds the dynamics of White supremacy and an eugenic Empire (hooks 1994). What we need, is to engage in a battle against the modern Western Eurocentric “monoculture of scientific knowledge [and fight for an] ecology of knowledges” (Santos 2004, xx). This is an invitation “to the promotion of non-relativistic dialogues among knowledges, granting equality of opportunities to the different kinds of knowledge engaged in an ever-broader epistemological disputes aimed both at maximizing their respective contributions to build a more democratic and just society and at decolonizing knowledge and power”. It is thus crucial to challenge *el patron colonial de poder* (Quijano 1991) and its yoke of multiculturalism which is profoundly “Eurocentric, [that] create and describe cultural diversity within the framework of the nation-states of the Northern hemisphere” (Santos 2004, xx-xxi). Imperialism and colonialism are the specific formations through which the West came to “see,” to “name,” and to “know” indigenous communities (Smith 1999, 60). Eurocentrism and its abyssal thinking is much more than a vision of ignorance and fear, and it “implies a theory of world history, that “legitimizes at one and the same time the existence of capitalism as a social system and the worldwide inequality that accompanies it” (Amin 2008, 156). Eurocentrism is the epistemicide. It is the reinforcement of a severe Occidentosis. Eurocentrism is not actually a social theory. It is indeed “a prejudice that distorts social theories” (Amin 2008, 166).



Modern Western Eurocentric thinking “is an abyssal thinking, a system of visible and invisible distinctions, the invisible ones being the foundation of the visible ones. The invisible distinctions are established through radical lines that divide social reality into two realms, the realm of “this side of the line” and the realm of “the other side of the line”. (Santos 2007b, 45). Such abyssal lines constitute the very core of “the epistemological foundation of the capitalist and imperial order that the global North has been imposing on the global South” (Santos et al. 2007, ix). There is no ‘incomplete other’ (Todorova 1997). Invisibility and non-existence of the “one side” are the roots of visibility and existence of the “another side”. In such context, not just knowledge, but the very question/answer “what is to think” is totally prostituted. How can ‘one’ actually claim that one really knows the things that one claims to know if an immense epistemological platform that congregates a myriad of other forms of episteme has been viciously produced as non-existent? Welcome to the colonial zone, a zone that is *par excellence*, the realm of incomprehensible beliefs and behaviors, which in no way can be considered knowledge, whether true or false.

Modernity by itself “is not only a cultural revolution” (Amin 2008, 88); one cannot delink the abyssal thinking from the political economy and culture of the material conditions of the epistemicide underlying the emergence and development of capitalism. It is actually the carburetor of such system. The very Western modern claim of “beyond the equator there are no sins,” was a kiss of death to the other side of the line (Santos 2007b, 49–50). Colonialism is “the blind spot upon which modern conceptions of knowledge and law are built” (Santos 2007b, 50). Thus, “modern humanity is not conceivable without modern sub-humanity” (Santos 2007b, 52).

Precisely because of this, why it is so difficult to destroy such social beast? Why does the creation of the world that we wish to see and so eloquently unpacked, for example, in the *Bamako Appeal* that “affirms the solidarity of the people of the north and the south in the construction of internationalism on an anti-imperialist foundation” (Amin 2008, 111) seem to be unreachable? Why the impossibility of having a sustainable critical theory and pedagogy before such social havoc? In fact, “it seems that there is no lack of issues that can promote anger, discomfort, and

indignation” (Santos 1999, 22). The aggressiveness of neoliberal policies has caused serious mutilation to the construction of a robust critical theory and pedagogy. No question about it. The systematic attacks on public education, the financial and cultural strangulation of public institutions, the disqualification and de-professionalization of teachers, poor preparation of teachers, the attacks on bilingualism, condescension for special education programs, adulteration and militarization of public higher education, the destruction of tenure, the multiplication of adjunct faculty, attacks on the liberal arts, blindness cult on STEM programs, the elimination of all programs that the market does not want, the precariousness of teachers’ work, attacks on unions, the manipulation of faculty senates, all of this has caused serious difficulties to the critical project. Should not this ‘chaos’ be more than enough to help the emergence of a dominant critical theory and pedagogy? What more will it take for a critical social theory to be established as a cultural hegemony in the face of such social tragedy?

The paradox is that I know of few educators who do not identify themselves as advocates of critical thinking and engaged in developing critical skills in their students. If one randomly grabs the syllabi of any undergrad or grad program will certainly notice listed in the learning objectives ‘the development of critical thought and critical skills’. As a phoneme and grapheme, the ‘critic’ colonized the academy. Now, if ‘we are all critical’ why is it that critical theory and pedagogy are always marginal? It seems that critical theory and pedagogies have also showed an inability to “sustain a convincing critique of the present social formation in face of the need for such critique” (Poster 1989, 1)

I argue that the lethal social construction carried out by neoliberal policies is a very short blanket to explain ‘the problems’ of critical theory and pedagogy. Neoliberal *quasi* Armageddon is not enough to explain a number of natural insufficiencies within the very counter hegemonic platform, again, despite huge accomplishments. It is crucial a serious and deep analysis at the very core of critical social pedagogy and theory to understand such insufficiencies and ways of moving forward. This implies, as Cabral would put it, intellectual honesty

## What happen to critical theory!

*The following day, no one died*

(Saramago 2009, 1)

The golden age of critical theory, Terry Eagleton (2003) would put it, is passing. Why? Why it is so difficult to build a critical theory? This question raise by Boaventura de Sousa Santos (1999) fuel intellectual restlessness in several leading critical scholars as well, especially those of a more Marxist or neo-Marxist inclination – who have always had a clear notion of certain inadequacies within their own approach. In “a world where there is so much to criticize, why has it become so difficult to produce a critical theory?” (Santos 1999, 197). Even before such great regression, as we have examined earlier, that should “cause us enough discomfort or indignation to compel us to question ourselves critically about the nature and moral quality of our society and to seek alternatives that are theoretically based on the answers we give to such interrogations” (Santos 1999, 199), painfully, and odd as it might be, it is not been easy to edify such theoretical alternatives (Santos 1999, 200). Undeniably, over the last couple of decades, “disruptions have multiplied in the planetary landscape, but they have not produced a change in the dominant paradigm, a conscious movement of self-organization, or a revolutionary upheaval” (Berardi 2012, 11). Irrespective of countless noteworthy efforts, conceptual sophistication and accomplishments, from “critical structuralist, existentialist, psychoanalytical, phenomenological approaches” it is unquestionable the critical theories have been incapable of being hegemonic. Why?

Critical theory, among several issues, erroneously, perceived “society as a totality and, as such, proposes a total alternative to the society that exists” (Santos 1999, 201). That is, “there is no single principle of social transformation, and even those who continue to believe in a future socialist see it as a possible future in competition with alternative futures. There are no unique historical agents or a unique form of domination” (Santos 1999, 202). In this context, that decolonial thinkers have strongly and forcefully denounced Western Eurocentric modernity in its dominant and specific counter dominant forms as tout court inconsequential to address global

and local needs (Santos 1999; 2014; Paraskeva 2014; 2016a; Grosfoguel 2010; 2011; Maldonado-Torres 2003; 2008; Walsh 2012). Furthermore, many of the concepts that were crucial “no longer have the centrality they once enjoyed or were internally so reworked and nuanced that they lost much of their critical strength”. (Santos 1999, 200). Critical theory needed to run away from mechanistic frameworks and move towards a major theoretical reconstruction to address the problems of the present (Lukacs 2011). In Terry Eagleton (2003) terms,

Structuralism, Marxism, Post-structuralism and the like are no longer the sexy topics as they were. What is sexy instead is sex. On the wider shores of the academia an interest in French philosophy has given away to the fascination with French kissing. In some cultural circles, the politics of masturbation exert far more fascination than the politics of the Middle East. Socialism is not out of sado-masochism. Among students of culture, the body is an immensely fashionable topic, but it is usually the erotic body not the famished body. There is a keen interest in coupling bodies, but not in laboring bodies (p. 2).

The great Utopias, Frederic Jameson (2014) argues, promised and pursued by powerful political movements and intellectuals over the past centuries, namely communism, socialism, and social democracy, for so many people are today a heap of concepts and obsolete practices in the suburbs of the scrapyard theory, a specimen of ideological scrap that for most even functions as a nightmare that offers nothing to the rail of utopia. In fact, the intention to believe in a utopia just painted with certain tones was one of the greatest pitfalls of Modernity and an undeniable symptom of epistemicide. That is, even the form of combating the epistemicide appeared proposed and defended in the form of another epistemicide. The critical post-critical platform was short to the utopian path. (Ahmad 2008, 38). There is a need for new utopian logic. Such new logic will not emerge within a critical *agora* which is flooded with pundits swindling in either/or battles between “class politics or identity politics, social politics or cultural politics, equality or difference, redistribution or recognition” (Fraser

1997, 3). Such either/or vacuity corrodes the post-socialist condition that is “an absence of any credible overreaching emancipatory project despite the proliferation of fronts of struggle; a general decoupling of the cultural politics of recognition from the social politics of redistribution; and a decentering of claims for equality in the face of aggressive marketization and sharply rising material inequality” (Fraser 1997, 3). In Nancy Fraser (2003, 9) articulations “neither redistribution alone, nor recognition alone can suffice to overcome injustice today” In fact, they are false antitheses. A comprehensive theory of justice requires both (Fraser 2003). The move away from “the mechanistic and positivist conception of modern science along with the repudiation of Enlightenment optimism, faith in reason and emphasis in transcultural values and human nature” (Best & Kellner 2001, 6), which could frame a postmodern turn, proved to be insufficient to the establishment of an hegemonic critical theory of society.

A web of multifarious complexities underpins the difficulties and ‘impossibilities’ social scientists faced and face in edifying a critical theory. First, “modern critical theory conceives of society as a totality and as such proposes a total alternative to society which exists” (Santos 1999, 201). Second, for Santos (1999) industrialization doesn’t equate necessarily with progress and development (p. 203). Summing up, Santos (1999) speaks to the difficulties of building a critical theory today:

The promises of modernity, because they have not been fulfilled, have become problems for which there seems to be no solution. However, the conditions that produced the crisis of modern critical theory have not yet become the conditions for overcoming the crisis. We face modern problems for which there are no modern solutions. According to one position, which we may term by recomforting postmodernity (*postmodernidade reconfortante*), the fact that there are no modern solutions and indicative that there are probably no modern problems, just as there were no promises of modernity before them. Therefore, accept and celebrate what exists. According to another position, which I term by disquieting or oppositional postmodernity, (*posmodernidade inquietante ou de oposicao*) the disjuncture

between the modernity of the problems and the postmodernity of possible solutions must be fully assumed and must be transformed into a starting point to face the challenges of constructing a post-modern criticism. And this is my position (p. 204).

Moreover, the very revolutionary dynamics of change ‘changed’. Revolution, as a philosophy of praxis, poses more problems than solutions (Dean 2017). The idea that revolutionary change framed ‘just’ and ‘only’ possible via a ‘party’ is, in fact, one of the major challenges, especially when we witness the successful victories accomplished by countless social movements in interrupting and defeating capitalist ‘power matrix’ (Quijano 1991; 2000a) and its ‘faked’ crises, innovations and transformations.

While the crisis of capitalism contains in itself enzymes to promote revolutionary change the truth of the matter is that such crisis mucks a myriad of challenges for critical theory and pedagogy as well. The challenge is not just to reconcile the incongruity between the sagas of modernity and the solutions required by postmodernity. That is to say, the task is not to reconcile this chasm. Rather, the task is to challenge the very pillar upon which modernity was sustained and imposed a specific non-inclusive totalitarian power matrix, wholeheartedly based on a eugenic epistemological framework that aimed to wipe out all other epistemological realities (Santos 1999; Paraskeva 2017). Santos (2014) termed this hell ‘the epistemicide.’ Hence, the way forward is not to assume a kind of ‘truth and reconciliation position’ between the frustrations of modernity and challenges of post-modernity.

Critical theories and pedagogies are thus faced with a gigantic challenge. A kind of dead end in what I would call the ‘cynicism of theory’, Peter Sloterdijk’s (1988) would put it. That is, critical theories and pedagogies of society need to openly assume not only the need ‘to reconcile the incongruity between the sagas of modernity and the solutions required by postmodernity’ (Santos 1999) but also, the crude fact that in a way, they are an integral part of such incongruity. Admitting this will not shadow all of their major noteworthy accomplishments. It’s quite the opposite. Denying such ‘incongruity’ is actually undermining their accomplishments.

Somehow the future forces a painful encounter with the past, a past filled with great achievements, but the fact is that such achievements – many of them – did not sufficiently persist to devastate the power of capitalist modernity. Given this context, how does curriculum theory respond to this challenge of Santos and other decolonial intellectuals? What is the way forward? What rivers, streams, and adjacent rivers will we swim in? What is the future riverbed of the radical critical curriculum river? Where should the radical critical curricular river lead us? Should we abandon the river? How to duel with a past, which is also full of achievements? How to face curriculum epistemicides? How to examine the role of curriculum theory in such epistemicide? How do we explain how we could be so inattentive to our ‘own’ functionalism, a functionalism that we paradoxically weave in our struggle against the dominant functionalist theories? What is our response as a field of study? What is the role of curriculum theory in an era in which truth is post-truth? It is obvious that none of these questions allows an easy answer; but it should make us think seriously about the importance of critical theory and pedagogy, particularly in terms of contributions tied to social and cognitive justice. In other spaces (Paraskeva 2011a; 2011b; 2014; 2016), I suggest possible paths to our theoretical field. I contend there is the need for a deterritorialization *tout court* and to assume an itinerant theoretical curricular perspective – an imperative for the project of decolonization.

## The generation of the utopia: ‘Don’t shoot them!’

*Social life becomes a swarm and  
in swarm it is not impossible to say  
‘no’. It’s irrelevant*

(Berardi 2012, 15).

Emerging from a vast and complex multitude of work done by intellectuals such as, Carl Grünberg, Max Horkeimer, Leo Lowenthal, Herbert Marcuse, Theodor Adorno, Walter Benjamin, Friedrich Pollock, Eric Fromm, Jürgen

Habermas, and many others through *The Institut für Sozialforschung* (Institute of Social Research) critical theory, soon established a solid terrain of contestation and alternatives to traditional theories of society. That imposed itself as “a theory of society against domination in all of its forms” (Held 1999, 35). In the field of education such structure of domination has been unpacked in one of the most influential oeuvres of the second part of last century – *The Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. Critical theory challenges the false notion of detached science, and runs “counter to prevailing habits of thought” (Horkheimer 1989, 218). It came as an important ideological weapon against knowledge-regulation toward knowledge-emancipation (Santos 1999), critical consciousness and self-reflection, profoundly crucial in the struggles to interrupt and smashed the scientific cult of objectivity (Arato & Gebhardt 1985). It is a non-unified theory (Kellner 1989, 7) thus, spreading through a variety of approaches that engages in a multitude of critiques on “the crises of capitalism, authoritarianism, Nazism and fascism, manipulation of areas of culture and social relationships and individual development, Marxism and the state” (Held 1999, 35). It is inherently a ‘supradisciplinary’ and not ‘interdisciplinary’ way of thinking, living and grasping reality. That is “it has refused to situate itself within an arbitrary or conventional academic division of labor. It traverses and undermines *boundaries* between competing disciplines, and stresses interconnections between philosophy, economics, and politics, and culture and society” (Kellner 1989, 7).

Such multifarious critical approaches had a huge impact within the educational and curriculum fields. During the 1970s and 1980s, the curriculum field was swamped by a plurality of scholars exhibiting a myriad of distinct critical approaches, although fundamentally based on a Western Eurocentric epistemological matrix (some of them severe), with tremendous repercussions within and beyond the ‘global north,’ especially in Europe and Latin America<sup>2</sup> (Paraskeva 2014; 2016; 2017). The struggle

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<sup>2</sup> The examples are countless. While in Spain the critical river flows into the education and curriculum field through the works of José Gimeno Sacristán, Julia Varela, Mariano Enguita, Jurjo Torres Santomé, and many others, and in Brasil through the works of Paulo Freire, Tomaz Tadeu da Silva, Antonio Moreira, Nilda Alves, Dermerval Saviani, Gaudencio Firgotto, Alfredo Veiga Neto, and more recently Elizabeth Macedo and Alice Lopes, and others, in Argentina Adriana Puigros, in



of this generation follows the historical struggles for a just curriculum, since Parker, Adaams, Dewey, Bode, Rugg, Counts, DuBois, through the Civil Rights Movement, the Students Revolt, the Romantic critics, Black-power movement, Anti-Vietnam war and anti-nuclear war as well as Anti-colonial wars campaigns, woman rights, among others (Kliebard 1995; Pinar et al 1995; Schubert 1980; Paraskeva 2011a; 2011b). One witnessed a cocktail of national-world events that profoundly influenced new cultural and social perspectives pushing for radical transformations. Universities soon “became the cockpit of culture as a political struggle” (Eagleton 2003), and society was faced with an educational architecture that was probably “at odds with the tasteless, clueless philistines who run the world and whose lexicon stretches only words like oil, golf, power and cheeseburger” (pp. 25–26). While social dissatisfaction was at its high level, “there was a visionary hope” (Eagleton 2003, 24), one that a group of scholars are so undeniably responsible to champion in our field.

Some of the intellectuals of these generation of the utopia were also notoriously influenced by the works of Gramsci, Williams, Freire among others, and making the neo-Marxist approach in education more accurate by paying close attention to issues, such as ideology, power, hegemony, identity, discourse; others were trying to go beyond these perspectives; and others were reacting against such platforms, which they saw as trapped within dangerous ideological and cultural compromises and mortgaged to eugenic economic interests, and an eugenic view of the scientificity of science and its questionable objectivity. We were witnessing the heyday of *neogramscism* (Paraskeva 2011a; 2011b).

To promote a better understanding of the work of this divergent group of critical scholars, I conceptualized a map for charting their theoretical contributions – what I referred to as the critical curriculum river (Paraskeva 2011a; 2014; 2016). This metaphor, drawn from Vincent Harding’s novel *There Is a River*, is an ideological card used to reveal the various critical tributaries that have taken critical curriculum theorists in many different

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Mexico Alicia de Alba and in South Africa Jonathan Jassen, In this regard see Darder, Antonia; Mayo, Peter and Paraskeva, Joao (2016). The Internationalization of Critical Pedagogy. An Introduction. In Antonia Darder, Peter Mayo and Joao Paraskeva (Eds), *International Critical Pedagogy Reader*. New York: Routledge, 1–14.

directions. Although this non-monolithic group of scholars has never occupied a dominant position in the field, it is undeniable how much they have contributed to the struggle for a more just curriculum. As Mia Couto (2008, 89) argues, “no river separates anyone, quite the opposite it weaves the destinies of the living”.

We are facing a generation of scholars who fought vigorously for a just education and curriculum, which never failed to see the conquest of social justice, equality and freedom in the horizon. We are talking about a group of intellectuals who dared to dream, who challenged instituted eugenic powers, that many of them never enjoy areas of academic comfort and in some cases faced fascist dismissals. We are before a generation that in so many was instrumental in belligerent battles for some civil rights that we enjoy today – inclusively within the academia – a fact that so many of us ignore or marginalize. We are talking about a group of thinkers and social activists that dare to open the chest to the bullets for a ‘world we all wish to see’ (Amin 2008), that knew quite well that to do justice of the worlds of the world, curriculum the way it has been produced needed to face a radical overhaul. Such cluster of intellectuals, as Ondjaki (1992) would say, “gave themselves the task of inventing a struggle against an education that already existed and one that had to come into existence” (p. 9); a group of scholars within and beyond our own field that magnetized social justice and equality as the horizon and bestride against all odds towards such horizon. We are talking about a generation of intellectuals that “was born in a time when time does not happen” (Couto 2008, 23), that knew fully well that what “really matter was the journey” (Couto 2008, 32), and that they needed “to believe that there was a noble cause, a reason why it was worth living” (Couto 2008, 95).

I call this handful of fighters, following Pepetela’s (1992) novel, *The generation of the utopia*. In Pepetela’s (1992) exegesis *the generation of the utopia* unpacks the role of Angolan intellectuals and its intricate nexus with other African intellectuals as well as Portuguese anti-fascist intellectuals, groups and the communist party in the struggle against 500 years of bloody Portuguese colonialism towards freedom and justice. It is an exegesis that examines the accomplishments and frustrations of a generation that

pursuit the utopia of an independent nation fighting tenaciously towards such utopia and got lost almost three decades later in a painful dystopia of a totalitarian regime with all its consequences. This generation, Pepetela (1992, 22) argues, “soon understood, right at the heart of the Empire, that the *batuques* (drums) that they heard in the childhood pointed to another journey that was not the journey imposed by the Portuguese fado”. A generation that dwelled acutely natural dialectics between nationalism and internationalism, Marxism and Communism, an utopia that forced painful purges within class, race and gender dynamics.

There is a slight difference between ‘utopian generation’ and ‘generation of the utopia.’ I consider the generation of educational scholars as the ‘generation of the utopia’ as they exemplified the possibility of another world through education, and a more just and relevant curriculum, as the way to make this dream become closer to realizing. In our field, however, as I will examine later on, we ended up moving from utopia to what I call involution. Despite that, it is crucial to understand that our debt to this generation will be undeniably forever open. As Mia Couto (2008, 27) would put it, such generation were the *Naparamas*, “avenger of my people’s sorrows, fighters against those who make war, warriors of justice”.

Such generation of utopia reflects an era in which “the conflict broke out on the streets over the uses of knowledge” (Eagleton 2003, 25). The impetus for social emancipation propelled the very idea of cultural revolution that migrated not just from the so called third world to the well-heeled West” (Eagleton 2003, 25), but also from other Parthenon’s of the Western modern hegemonic power in a “heady mélange of Fanon, Marcuse, Reich, Beauvoir, Gramsci and Godard” (Eagleton 2003, 25). The unsustainability of Modern Western Eurocentric oppression, segregation and exploitation was the organic compost feeding a collective belief about the possibility of impossibility yet possibility. The utopia of a world one wished to see (Amin 2008) was naturally sustained on the streets in a web of major resistance against colonialism and imperialism battles from Southern Africa and Northern Africa, Middle East, Asia, South and Central America, East and West Europe to the US. Needless to say, that in these battles, “humanities lost their innocence” (Eagleton 2003, 26). It is undeniable that these

mélanges of social cultural events flipped the table reminding even those on the left that battles between production and consumerism required a more sophisticated left equation.

The generation of utopia helped galvanizing and materializing social justice and curriculum relevance as the utopia within and beyond a generation of educators. That is, such generation did not just draw a utopian picture in the lost horizon, they actually dared to draw multiple Western epistemological paths that would lead to that horizon. The utopia was wrapped as real. The generation of utopia was responsible for the construction and stimulation of a fantastic and more than just utopia in a given utopian generation. The utopian generation was in a way authored by a complex non-monolithic generation of the utopia. However, like any political battle, the struggles waged by the 'generation of the utopia' had advances, retreats, contradictions, victories, and defeats that would eventually lead to the weakening and crisis of the utopian generation. The turning back between the generation of utopia and the utopia generation would prove fatal to critical theories and pedagogies. Despite enormous evident successes, it was always a high road for the advocates of a critical theories and pedagogies. Its zenith did not last long. Such prominent collective leadership would face severe criticism, not only from the dominant tradition, but also from the very core of the progressive tradition itself. I will focus my point on the devastating challenges from within its own ranks.

For instance, Liston and Zeichner (1987) expressed the urgent need to accurately perceive the meaning of radical or critical pedagogy within the critical education platform. Wexler (1987) mercilessly criticizes the critical theory overemphasis on reproduction and resistance, which made "the new sociology of education historically backward-looking and ideologically reactionary" (p. 127), claiming for the need to incorporate post-structural and postmodern tools to better understand society, schools and curriculum – a juicy epistemological avenue explored by scholars, such as Giroux, McLaren, Pinar, Doll, Grument, Miller and others.

However, a major blast was well articulated by Liston (1988). He argued that the works of a particular radical Marxist tradition within this

river (including the works of Apple and Wexler) exhibit a “functionalist approach and have neglected crucial empirical investigations” (p. 15). Liston’s claims that particular radical critical Marxist approaches were criticizing functionalist dominant and counter-dominant traditions relied precisely on a functionalist approach. To add more ashes Ellsworth’s (1989, 299) denounces a reactionary impulse of the political (related with the functionalist approach) and edifies an acerbic critique of the shortcomings of critical pedagogy, arguing, “What diversity do we silence in the name of liberatory pedagogy?” The contradictions within the critical platform were not unnoticed by Giroux (1996, 691–695) as well. He openly challenge the reductionism of correspondence and reproduction exhausted narratives, and the capacity to create a language that allows for competing solidarities and political vocabularies that do not reduce the issues of power, justice, struggle, and inequality to a single script, a master narrative that suppresses the contingent, historical, and the everyday as a serious object of study. Also, Apple and Weis (1983), McCarthy (1988), Apple and Carlson (1998) and others have tried to address some puzzling silences produced by the critical platform, regarding class, race, gender, and sexuality, thus running away from any uni-dimensional theory in which economic form was the determinant category (Freire, 1990). Critical theory could not thus resist to its overt functionalism of challenging a grand narrative with another master narrative, one that obliterates the nexus science, society and the subject (Popkewitz 1978), and needed to recognize another dimension of the political battle, that is linguistic genocide (Darder 2001)

Make no mistakes. The ‘generation of the utopia’ achieved many accomplishments. However, they have been incapable of interrupting the epistemicide. This is not a minor issue. It establishes a clear line between critical poststructural and post-modern and feminist theories and decolonial and anti-colonial intellectuals that saw critical poststructural and post-modern and feminist theories as fundamentally part of the Western Eurocentric epistemological matrix contaminated with the same virus that produced and legitimized other non-Western Eurocentric epistemologies as ‘nonexistent’ (Santos 2014; Paraskeva 2016; Smith 1999). To say that radical and critical theories and pedagogies are ‘part of the

epistemicide' might be read as a loaded statement. However, the fact is that they mercilessly ignored that the struggle against the dominant groups and specifically against neoliberalism could never be completely victorious by working only within a modern Western Eurocentric epistemological platform itself, after all the first and ultimate responsible for the major atrocities committed historically. There is clearly an unconscious connivance that is urgent to interrupt. It is undeniable though that through curriculum in its form and contents, neoliberalism is increasingly imposing itself as a public pedagogy that has been responsible for the production of what Berardi (2012, 15) calls "swarms" which increasingly makes our task more complex. A swarm, he (2012) states, "is a plurality of living beings whose behavior follows (or seems to follow) rules embedded in their neural system. Biologists call a swarm "a multitude of animals of similar size and bodily orientation, moving together in the same direction and performing actions in a coordinated way, like bees building a hive or moving toward a plant where they can find resources for making honey" (pp. 15–16). Within social havoc, that is "in conditions of social hypercomplexity, human beings tend to act as a swarm. Social life becomes a swarm and in swarm it is not impossible to say no. It's irrelevant" (Berardi 2012, 15).

Notwithstanding the violence and cruelty of neo-liberalism that we should not minimize in our analyses, we must also realize the contradictions that emerge at the very heart of counter dominant platforms; that is, in the battle between dominant and counter dominant groups regardless of accomplishments from the latter, it would also ended up producing a surge within the very own counter hegemonic tradition exposing the wounds created, among others, by a myriad of critical, poststructuralist, postmodernist, feminist crucial wrangles. Such wrangles would end up proved being insufficient. I argue such insufficiency as one of the enzymes to help us forward. The battle between traditional hegemonic movements and 'the generation of the utopia,' despite noteworthy accomplishments of the latter, tended to create a diffuse and opaque zone, a kind of theoretical putrefaction, a theoretical pitch, a profound impasse. Paradoxically, the great and unmistakable advances of the generation of the utopia created a

long and hesitant moment. The great and massive theoretical evolution and development – dominant and counter dominant – led to an involution, a curriculum involution. Evolution meant involution, a state of regression that delays our epistemological just walk towards the utopia. Should the field's utopia be pillared in a utopian theory? What a great avenue to be itinerantly explored in a future.

## Curriculum involution

*Capitalism needs a human being  
who has never yet existed – one  
who is prudently restrained in the  
office and widely anarchic in the  
shopping mall*

(Eagleton 2003, 28).

As I was able to argue elsewhere (Paraskeva 2017), the clashes between dominant and specific counter-dominant traditions and within each of these traditions fueled what I would call, drawing from José Gil (2009), a 'curriculum involution.' In such sometimes – ruthless struggles, neither the dominant nor the counter-dominant traditions were able to claim full victory; thus we keep experiencing an increasing void between, on one hand, the absence of the consolidation of the a fully segregated curriculum – we do have countless examples of counter-dominant victories – and, on the other hand, the full absence of the emergence of the new human being. And within such impasse, the epistemicide keeps being perpetuated. There is thus a void defined by a paradox: neither the 'old human being' died, nor the 'creation' of the new human being was fully materialized. Neither the old social order remained safe, nor the new social order emerged. That is, while capitalism needs and seeks "a human being who has never yet existed – one who is prudently restrained in the office and widely anarchic in the shopping mall" (Eagleton 2003, 28), counter hegemonic movements and groups, while able in many successful ways, to deconstruct how lethal is

such capitalist social casserole, they have been also unable to break the modes and conditions of production propelling the capitalist matrix, and in so doing flourishing the emergence of a new autonomous human being free from the social and cognitive chains of oppression, segregation and inequality. The inability to fully establish 'their human being' is the malaise affecting dominant and counter-dominant platforms.

Counter-dominant movements were unable to fully destroy the dominant tradition and impose not just an alternative curriculum platform, but a non-abysal curriculum that respect non-Western Eurocentric epistemological frameworks. To rely on José Gil's (2009) framework, these battles represented no 'real' tragedy as they were stripped of their tragic dimension. Instead, a curriculum involution occurred (Gil 2009) that, in too many ways, points into a 'regression.' No transformation occurred. The improvement drove into regression. Such involution reflects a "positive feedback" which define the hypercomplex epistemological environment of our times (Berardi 2012), that is a "modern time without modern solutions a time of strong questions and weal answers" (Santos 2009, 3). Contrary to negative feedback, positive feedback "increases the magnitude of a perturbation in response to the perturbation itself" (Berardi 2012, 12).

These belligerent battles that opposed hegemonic and counter hegemonic movements and also the wrangles within such movements, promoted a kind of theoretical *coup d'état*, an attack on the space and time of theory, a theoretical mope, a theorycide, paving the way for a dangerous anti-intellectual intellectualism one of the enzymes of the de-skilling of teachers. Anti-intellectualism is the new form of intellectualism forcing educators to comply with corporate models of schooling, and partnering with the dangerous cult of trivializing teaching as a mere technical skill. In such dangerous spiral of social and pedagogical disaster, one witnesses overtly concerted attacks on theory – honestly of any kind –, in a field populated by thirsty rationales based on buzzwords such as 'turn around models.' Intellectualism is becoming a rare collectable in school settings (Paraskeva 2013). Such theorycide fueled by curriculum involution (Gil 2009) forces us to examine not just critical theory, but the very future of theory in our field within what José Gil (1998) calls "antinomy of power";



in doing so, and being a “theory of society against domination in all of its forms” (Held 1999, 35), as we stated previously, critical theory and pedagogies of society “are a discourse of power and on power” (Gil 1998, 58.9).

José Gil (1998) scrutinizes on the limits of power within a thesis and antithesis yarn; that is the limits of power needed to be contemplated between and within a thesis, that states that “all power has a beginning and an ending in time and has limited spatial territory” (Gil, 1998, p. 56.9) and an antithesis that states that “power has neither a beginning nor an ending in time nor does it have spatial limits” (Gil, 1998, 56). That is the proof of the thesis relies on the fact that “if the power had neither a beginning nor an ending in time, each power, at any given time, could only constitute of or be a link in a vaster power that would have preceded it and would follow it” (Gil 1998, 56). As for the antithesis, “if power had an absolute beginning and an end in time, there would be time preceding this beginning, and time after the end, when there could be no power” (Gil 1998, 57). I argue that curriculums scholars need to deal with both ‘contradictory definitions.’ That is, there is a fundamental contradiction on the definition on the limits of power in both thesis and antithesis. To better understand the accomplishments, frustrations and failures of critical theories and pedagogies of society one needs to understand in which way critical impulses fit and respond to such antinomy. That is, what is the palpable finitude of critical theory? Is critical theory a framework designed out of finitude? Whose finitude? Can we divagate on the infinitude of the critical? How big is such infinitude? Whose infinitude? Who defines such finitude? What constitutes such finitude or the lack thereof? Is it really important or not to figure that out? How can one explore both time and space of such critical framework even if it is ‘finiteless’ or ‘infiniteless’? In which space and time can we explore the what/whose continuity and discontinuity of critical approaches? Are the Modern Western Eurocentric counter dominant traditions completed exhausted? Exploring the (in) finitude of critical theory will allow one to understand what kind of “elements of impotence or weakness” (Gil 1998, 56) it carries, as well as the real colors of space and time “preceding its beginning and its end”

(Gil 1998, 56). That is, knowing fully well that “there is no future without death” (Saramago 2009), and knowing that critical approaches are not dead and very far from that state, I guess I don’t want to ask “what is its future,” but I would state that it is important to understand and examine what actually died or needs to die within the multitude of the critical platform, so a future could be real. To unpack the knots of the involution that our field faces, one has to understand the real limits of critical theory and pedagogy.

One of the fundamental limitations relies on its incapacity to break from the heavy chains of the Western modern Eurocentric epistemological platform. Although critical theories and pedagogies understood fully well that any given (counter)power produces naturally “another space of power” (Gil 1998, 58.9), the truth is that the debates and challenges and battles occurred only within Western modern Eurocentric epistemological agora. Pundits within both dominant and counter-dominant traditions wield arguments based just on a particular Eurocentric framework, that proofed to be part of the problem, i.e. the epistemicide (Santos 2014), the curriculum epistemicide (Paraskeva 2016a; 2016b; 2016c; 2017). That is while José Gil (1998, 57) is accurate when he claims that “any power that has territorial frontiers must always cross them to better assure its power,” the truth is that most critical theory and pedagogies repeatedly fail to recognize that a sustainable and just cross of such frontiers will never happen in a sustainable way, if they will not strip themselves from the totalitarian cult of Modern Western Eurocentric epistemological rationale. Critical theory and pedagogies antinomy of power needs to explode with the chains of its coloniality shares (Santos 2007a), a colonial zone that is now paved by such involution(ary) momentum that produces a dangerous ossification of the hypertrophy of theory of any kind, as odd as it might be. I would argue that the (in)finity of critical approaches needed to consciously assume not just such curriculum involution, but also, importantly, its very own ‘skin on the game,’ an involution that by not creating a ‘transformation and tragedy’ (Gil 1999) ended up solidifying the matrix the lethal impact of the colonial zone. Curriculum involution is a current perpetrator of the epistemicide.

In this sense, and as a way to address such curriculum involution, and as I argued elsewhere (Paraskeva 2011a; 2014; 2017), critical theories and pedagogies needs to decolonize, to de-link. Such process pushes one for an itinerant curriculum theoretical path. Such itinerant move, to challenge the dangerous of a putrefied involution momentum, calls for “exfoliation processes” (Gil 1998, 127–128), a metamorphosis that helps one to understand how the critical and pedagogical impulses unfolds and occupies (or not) certain spaces. In this process of unpeeling, splitting, breaking, inflating, shrinking, paces and paves a ritual that opens the door for an infralanguage that “opens passageways between heterogeneous spaces” (Gil 1998, 139). Those passageways needed to be sentient that there is a huge and rich diverse epistemological vein beyond the Western modern Eurocentric one in which critical theories and pedagogical persist in operating. Such ‘infralanguage’, or as José Gil (1998) argues an infra(sensual)language, explodes out of the clash, touch, wrangle, between theoretical turfs. Critical and pedagogical approaches needed to take advantage of such momentum to challenge the ur-fascism (Eco 2017) and the severe occidentosis facing Modern Western Eurocentric epistemological matrix.

## Severe occidentosis

*Diversity is the hallmark of  
freedom*

(Al-l-Ahmad 1984, 113).

One of the great consequences and symptoms of such “random regression” (Geiselberger 2017, 10) or “paradoxical time” (Santos 2005), is the emergence of a ferocious “populism” (Mouffe 2005; Laclau 2005; Panizza 2005), that has been able to complexify fascist and extreme right impulses, what Umberto Eco (2017) calls ‘ur-fascism or eternal fascism’. That is the “return of dangerous last century authoritarian forms in different historical circumstances” (Eco 2017, 14). Ur-fascism, or better say, ‘ur-eugenicism’, not only takes advantage of a massive set of unsystematic

regression phenomena, but also triggers a dangerous chain of equivalences (Laclau 2005), due to a short circuit between experiences and expectations (Santos 1999). Such short-circuits paved the way for the emergence of “regressive movements” (Porta 2017, 73). Populism implies the production of populist subjects (Panizza 2005) reinforcing the eugenic hegemony of modern Western Eurocentric ‘abyssal matrix’ (Santos 2014), a matrix that is fertilized by and pollinates curriculum content and form, teacher education and evaluation, thus becoming increasingly cruel and brutal in the sedimentation and development of an overt epistemicide. In fact When right wing parties win, Franco ‘Bifo’ Berardi (2012) argues, “their first preoccupation is to impoverish public schooling and to grow up media conformism [and] the result of the spread of ignorance and conformism [is a] a dark blend of techno-financial authoritarianism and aggressive populist action,” a lethal devise aimed to perpetuate a chirurgical epistemological cleansing (p. 12).

One of the enzymes of such compost of cleansing is what Jalal Al-l-Ahmad (1987) calls Occidentosis, a plague from the West, an illness like tuberculosis “that closely resembles an infestation of weevils” (Al-l-Ahmad 1987, 27). In his (1984) words,

Occidentosis, has two poles or extremes – two ends of one continuum. One pole is the Occident, by which I mean Europe, Soviet Russia, and North America, the developed and industrialized nations that can use machines to turn raw materials into more complex forms that can be marked as goods. The other pole is Asia and Africa, or the backward developing and non-industrialized nations that have been made into consumers of Western goods (p. 27).

Modern Western Eurocentric artillery is not confined just to the military and its massive mechanisms of production and markets, but it is spread through world global terrains, such as “UNESCO, FAO, UN and ECAFE, which constitute the basis for the Occidentosis for all non-Western nations” (Al-l-Ahmad 1987, 30). As a plague, Occidentosis, which started when the West began the production and cleansing of the Other, exhibits

different symptoms in different non-Western nations. Occidentosis is the “aggregate of events in the life, culture, civilization, and mode of thought of a people having no support tradition, no historical continuity, no gradient of transformation, but having only what the machine brings them” (Al-l-Ahmad 1987, 34). It characterizes an era “in which we have not yet acquired the machine, in which we are not yet versed in the mysteries of its structure. Occidentosis characterizes an era in which we not have yet grown familiar with the preliminaries to the machine, the new sciences and technologies. Occidentosis characterizes an era in which the logic of the market place and the movements of oil compel us to buy and consume the machine” (Al-l-Ahmad 1987, 34).

In examining such puzzled ‘mechanosis’ that infects the non-Western and Western abyssal matrix, Jalal Al-l-Ahmad (1987, 35) turns to education to understand the ‘whys’ and ‘hows’ in which non-Western nations failed to build the machine and grow-up Occidentotic. The Iranian society, Jalal Al-l-Ahmad (1987, 112) argues is sustained by an education system that foster the plague, that reinforces occidentosis. Diversity that should be viewed as a “hallmark of freedom” is negatively tainted; the diversity in the way our schools operate is the diversity of wild grasses” (Al-l-Ahmad 1987, 113). Moreover, such occidentosis, is also pumped by “Occidentotic intellectuals” (Al-l-Ahmad 1987, 35), what I called elsewhere (Paraskeva 2016) the sepoys of coloniality. Such sepoys have been instrumental in ‘copy pasting’ the very worst of the Modern Western Eurocentric matrixes in non-Western non-Eurocentric nations an overt example of the real colors of coloniality.

The sepoys of coloniality – so many of them in the academia – are the amplifiers and loudspeakers of a noisy silence about the richness of the very non-Western epistemological perspectives and quite responsible for the fact that “there is no original research, no discovery, no invention, no solution, just these repairman, start-up men, operators of the Western machinery and industrial goods, calculators of the strength of materials, and such absurdities” (Al-l-Ahmad 1987, 115). Education and curriculum are clearly at the very root of such Occidentosis, a pandemic that feeds

an eugenic abyssal matrix and it is oxygenated by ‘the’ abyssal thinking (Santos 2014).

I argue that critical approaches, despite significant conquests, show clear insufficiencies and were incapable of stopping the mass production of ‘occidentotics’ and smashing curriculum ‘mechanotics.’ Some of the insufficiencies that are structural were addressed in the course of the historical processes towards a more just and equal society, education, and curriculum. To keep denying these insufficiencies is to assume a comfortable position, jamming curriculum theory, or what remains of it, in the mud of the involution and regression. Such insufficiencies triggered a *hypertrophía theoricae*, among others: (a) anti-functionalist functionalism, eugenic institutionalism, academicism and Western cult of the scientificity of science, abyssal matrix, exoticizing the other, casteless focus, spiritual vacuity.

We have a duty to fight collectively so that, as José Gil (1998) would say, “critical theory does not become and petrified as a tribal theory”; critical theory is not devoid of infinity and I hope we do not want to be ourselves to embark on the daydream of instituting it. To address such insufficiencies, I argue that we need to be committed to “exfoliation processes” (Gil 1998, 127–128), which situates the complicated conversation (Pinar 2004) into a totally different level. Critical approaches, reflect a combination of interactions with the concrete real(ity), relations “that imply exfoliations” (Gil 1998, 126) morphs, within and beyond the Modern Western Eurocentric cronospace. Such exfoliations will help peeling and heeling specific dogmatic and reductive armoires of the present/past, essential processes, which allows theory to “turn onto” a different just epistemological level of praxis (Gil 1998, 126) fostering what Tibebe (2011) calls “polycentric egalitarian humanism that reflects the recognition and respect of human diversity on the basis of real equality” (p. xix). Exfoliation processes will allow just conditions for de-linking to decolonize, break, and dissolve the modern Western Eurocentric matrix and its uniqueness; it will help the critical platform to be better equipped to challenge eugenic processes of defoliation that erupted right in the first “morning of the Occident in black Africa, that was spangled over with smiles, with cannon

shots, with shining glass beds, a morning of accouchement: the known world was enriching itself by a birth that took place in mire and blood” (Kane 1997, 154).

This might well be a battle of the infinite, a battle for the infinite and within the infinite, yet not an infinite battle. The “infinite is then the possible” (Pessoa 2006, 56), a present possible “as the only reality is the eternal present, the undying now (Pessoa 2006, 47). Critical theories and pedagogies need a new logic towards the utopia of a just world. To do that critical theories need to radically de-link from its own oppressive epistemological Western Eurocentric matrix without renegading it and engage in what I (Paraskeva 2016; 2011) coined as itinerant curriculum theory (hereafter ICT), one that pushes for a non-abysal momentum. ICT is a new conceptual grammar (Jupp 2017) that moves itinerantly within and beyond “(a) the coloniality of power, knowledge, and being; (b) epistemicides, linguicides, abyssality, and the ecology of knowledges; and, (c) poststructuralist hermeneutic itinerancy” producing a new non-abysal alphabet of knowledge (Paraskeva, forthcoming). ICT is thus a way to challenge curriculum epistemicides (Paraskeva 2016; Santos 2014) and implies “to deterritorialize both curriculum and teacher education fields which cannot be done without counteracting linguisticides or epistemological euthanasia” (Moreira 2017, 3; Paraskeva 2011) carried out by the colonial powers in the past (but still going on in the present). In so doing floods the terrain with a language beyond Western Eurocentric linguistic formations, hoping for alternative philosophy of praxis. ICT aims toward “a general epistemology of the impossibility of a general epistemology” (Santos 2007, 67). Sentient that subaltern and marginalized individuals and communities have been oppressed by theory (Smith 1999, 39), ICT implies a

a theorist that is an epistemological radical, an epistemological pariah, who is challenging and challenged by a theoretical path that is inexact yet rigorous; s/he ‘runs away’ from any unfortunate ‘canonology’. Such itinerant theory(ist) provokes (and exists in a midst of) a set of crises, and produces laudable silences. It provokes an abstinence of theoretical uniformity

and stabilization. The theory(ist) is a volcanic chain, who shows a constant lack of equilibrium, is always a stranger in his/her own language. It is not a sole act, however; it is a populated solitude. ICT challenges the sociology of absences and how certain non-Western epistemologies have been rendered as nonexistent; challenges any form of *indeginestoude*; that is, it challenges any form of romanticization of indigenous cultures and knowledges, and it is not framed in any dichotic skeleton of West-rest (Paraskeva 2011, 177–178).

ICT opens the veins of the oppressive Modern Western Eurocentric epistemological canon. It is against any canon (Paraskeva 2011). It is, as Darder (2016) argues, “an epistemology of liberation that can persistently challenge structures of authority, hierarchy, and domination in every aspect of life must be cultivated, nurtured and embodied within the blessed messiness and unwieldy chaos of everyday life within schools and communities” (p. 12). ICT confronts and throws the subject to a permanent unstable question of “what is there to think?” (Paraskeva 2011). ICT pushes one to think in the light of the future as well as to question how “we” can actually claim to really know the things that “we” claim to know, if “we” are not ready specifically to think the unthinkable, to go beyond the unthinkable and master its infinitude (Paraskeva 2016a; 2011). In this sense, ICT is “a theory of change” (Spivak 1988, 3), that goes beyond confrontation as the matrix for change and assumes a commitment to ‘radical co-presence’ (Santos 2014), or, better said, a subaltern radical co-presence towards a non-abyssal path. ICT “travels extensively through the ‘other side of the epistemic abyss’” (Moreira 2017, 2). ICT challenges book worship (Tse Tung 2007, 45) and the yoke of writing as *prima facie* condition to the legitimacy of what is knowledge (Smith 1999). In that sense, ICT is an ethical take; it is the subaltern momentum. ICT is people’s theory. It is a clear call against the precariousness of any fixed theoretical position. ICT is “not merely invocation or evocation; it exemplifies how ideas can be added powerfully to the sources of curriculum studies by substantially including Works” (Schubert 2017, 10). Above and beyond



the Modern Western Eurocentric epistemological dominant and counter-dominant traditions.

An itinerant curriculum theory is inherently “an exfoliation” (Gil 1998, 127) metamorphosis, a sill of infinite mourning’s (Couto 2008, 105), an anti and post “mechanotic” (Al-l-Ahmad 1987, 31) momentum that will seek to create “a powder, gentle, maneuverable, and capable of blowing up men without killing them, a powder that, in vicious service, will generate a life, and from the exploded men, will be born the infinite men that are inside him” (Couto 2008, 68). ICT is a “new form of political affirmation grounded a global *epistemological* visions and interests to be favored and courses of action to be followed that are sustained in people’s history” (Popkewitz 1978, 28). In this regard, an itinerant theoretical path without floodgates because the best sentinel is always to have no floodgates (Couto 2008). In so doing the itinerant curriculum theory honors a legacy of accomplishments and frustrations, understanding that de-linking will always be to make theory, a just theory. To delink and decolonize, while honoring the legacy of the critical path taking it into a different level, it is also a decolonial attempt to do critical theory (Kellner 1989, 2). In so doing an itinerant curriculum theory re-thinks utopianism. While it is “in the nature of utopia not to be realized” (Santos 1995, 481), such new logic needs to be de-linked from coloniality matrix and decolonize it as well. Utopian’s legitimacy relies on a “new epistemology and psychology, which resides on the virtual archeology of the present” (Santos 1995, 481). This implies moving from traditional hegemonic and counter-hegemonic utopian frameworks and engage in what Santos (1995) defines as “heteretopia”:

Rather than the invention of a place elsewhere or nowhere, I propose a radical displacement within the same place: ours. From orthotopia to heretotopia, from the center to the margin. The purpose of this displacement is to allow a telescopic vision of the center and a microscopic vision of what the center is led to reject, in order to reproduce credibility as the center (Santos 1995, 481).

Such heterotopia is different. It implies processes of de-linking from coloniality and modernity, decolonize it; it responds to Jürgen Habermas (1981) challenge of modernity as an incomplete project with a commitment to decolonize it.

Our task, is not to “shoot the utopist” (Santos 1995) or the utopia that inhabits not just within us, but also bubbles out of the debris of modernity. As educational scholars our task is to de-link and decolonize it, a crucial commitment towards a ruthless critique of every existent epistemology as a *sine qua non* condition for a just curriculum theory.

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